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USAF Declass/Release Instructions On File

D/I. USAF PROPOSED REVISION OF NIE-37

25 May 1951

SUBJECT: TERMS OF REFERENCE: NIE-37: LIKELIHOOD OF A SOVIET
ATTACK ON JAPAN (Draft for IAC Representatives'
consideration)

THE PROBLEM

To assess the likelihood of a Soviet attack on Japan during
1951.

PART ONE: SOVIET CAPABILITIES FOR INVADING JAPAN

ASSUMPTION

That Soviet and US forces in the Far East at present will
remain roughly the same for the remainder of 1951.

~~We believe that in assessing the likelihood of Soviet in-~~
~~vasion of Japan, we must take into consideration the USSR's~~
~~own probable evaluation of its capabilities for successful~~
~~invasion. Therefore a realistic examination of probable~~
~~Soviet capabilities must give due consideration to the pro-~~
~~bable expectation from the US forces which the USSR knows are~~
~~available or can be made available during 1951.~~

*This should involve careful
to the point of war-gaming or examination of US plans or dispositions,
it should merely take into account the probable Soviet estimate of
the forces which would oppose them, on a comparative listing basis.*

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I. WHAT COMMUNIST FORCES ARE AVAILABLE?

A. What is Soviet strength in the Far East? (General Statement)

1. Order of battle (at divisional level), location, combat effectiveness of ground forces?
2. Strength and disposition of naval forces, merchant fleet, and auxiliary forces? Capacity of merchant shipping?
3. Order of battle of air forces and air facilities?

B. What portion of the above forces would be available for invasion of Japan in 1951, assuming that Soviet forces maintain a strategic defensive along the Korean frontier? In view of logistical difficulties, the necessity of defending key strategic and industrial areas in the Far Eastern USSR, supporting Communist China, garrisoning Dairen, etc., the USSR obviously could make available only a portion of its over-all strength. (General statement)

C. What other Communist forces might be available? How firm do we consider the reported existence of Japanese PW troops? Would they be sufficiently reliable to be used? Would the USSR either need Chinese Communist ground forces or consider it politically desirable to use such forces?

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II. WHAT ARE THE CAPABILITIES OF THE ABOVE FORCES, ASSUMING US OP-OSITION? WITHOUT OPPOSITION?

- A. What are Soviet ground force capabilities for amphibious and airborne ~~seizure of a firm lodgment area (a) in~~ operations against Japan?
- B. ~~Would Soviet naval forces be able to (1) secure the contiguous waters around the invasion area; (2) screen a landing; and (3) protect the lines of communication?~~ What are Soviet naval capabilities against Japan?
- C. ~~Could the Soviet air forces achieve and maintain local air superiority over the beachhead, interdict the land and sea approaches, or protect Soviet staging bases and lines of communication? Since this would probably be a critical factor in a Soviet decision, such factors as air facilities, sortie rates, and combat effectiveness might be analyzed in detail.~~ What are Soviet air capabilities against Japan?
- D. LOGISTIC CONSIDERATIONS: What are Soviet capabilities, in terms of amphibious and airborne lift, for mounting and maintaining an amphibious and airborne operations against Japan? ~~of the size indicated above? How would the USSR logistically supply and resupply an invasion force, especially with DGL? Are Soviet Far Eastern~~

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~~stockpiles adequate for the purpose and for how long?~~
~~How much Soviet shipping will be necessary, with due~~
~~allowance for attrition?~~

(1) How much shipping available?

(2) Airlift capacity?

(3) Adequacy of stockpiles?

III. OTHER FACTORS BEARING ON SOVIET MILITARY CAPABILITIES?

A. ~~Where and how could Soviet forces invade Japan?~~

What is the most probable invasion pattern? ~~(a)~~

~~assuming the US still holds South Korea? (b)~~

~~assuming US loss of Korea? Would not the over-~~
~~riding necessity for land-based air cover almost~~
~~require invasion from the North at present?~~

B. ~~What landing beaches and ports could the Soviets~~

~~use initially in order to bring in the bulk of~~

~~the assault force? Are these adequate? How would~~

the geographical position, landing beaches, ports,

and terrain of the Japanese Islands affect a Soviet
invasion?

C. How would the ~~poor~~ weather, especially around

~~Hokkaido~~, affect an invasion prospects? When

would be the best time of year to invade?

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- D. ~~Could the USSR expect to achieve tactical surprise~~
~~by a warning night the US expect to achieve and~~
~~how might this affect Soviet capabilities? What is~~
the Soviet capability to assemble land, sea, and air
invasion forces without revealing their timing and
intent of an attack on Japan?
- E. ~~Would the USSR estimate that possible diversions,~~
~~such as a simultaneous Chinese Communist threat to~~
~~or invasion of Formosa or Hong Kong, could split~~
~~US air and naval forces? Might a simultaneous~~
~~Chinese Communist offensive in Korea be expected~~
~~to pin down the Eighth Army and hamper reinforcement~~
~~of Japan? Would the majority of Japanese~~
actively support the U.S. forces? How would this
affect Soviet capabilities? How significant an
increment to Soviet capabilities would be Japanese
Communist subversive, sabotage, and guerrilla
activities?
- F. ~~Would the majority of Japanese actively support~~
~~the US forces? How would this affect Soviet capa-~~
~~bilities? How significant an increment to Soviet~~
~~capabilities would be Japanese Communist subversive,~~
~~sabotage, and guerrilla activities?~~

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IV. ~~COULD THE USSR SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAIN AND EXPAND ITS INITIAL LODGMENT IN JAPAN?~~ SOVIET VULNERABILITIES.

~~We consider this a crucial question on which any Soviet estimate might well turn. Assuming the Soviet forces could seize a substantial beachhead, could they expand it and occupy the remainder of Japan?~~

- A. How vulnerable are the long Soviet overland and seaborne supply lines, including the Trans-Siberian, to US attack? ~~following an invasion?~~
- B. ~~Could the Soviet forces expect to maintain themselves logistically in the face of US surface and submarine attacks, carrier strikes, and other air attacks on invasion shipping, key ports, and rail lines, perhaps including use of atomic bombs?~~ Vulnerability of Soviet industrial capacity in the Far East to:
- (1) Air attack
 - (2) Sea attack
 - (3) Sabotage
- C. ~~Would the USSR estimate that it could build up decisive strength in the beachhead faster than a US defensive build-up? Assuming the capture of Hokkaido, could the forces on Hokkaido be expected to invade Honshu successfully?~~
- D. ~~Does the terrain, especially in Hokkaido and Northern~~

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~~Honshu, favor the invaders? Are there natural
obstacles which would facilitate the defense of
Honshu in particular against invasion from the
North?~~

V. EFFECTS OF KOREAN CAMPAIGN ON SOVIET CAPABILITIES
~~HOW DOES THE KOREAN CAMPAIGN AFFECT SOVIET CAPABILITIES?~~

~~Assuming that the Chinese Communists can contain the US
forces in Korea, to what extent does US involvement in Korea
make it more feasible for the USSR to invade Japan? On the
other hand, to what extent would Communist seizure of Korea
facilitate invasion of Japan? To what extent does present
Soviet involvement in the Korean campaign affect their military
capabilities to invade Japan? How would Communist seizure of
Korea facilitate invasion of Japan?~~

~~12. IN SUMMARY, CONSIDERING THE ABOVE FACTORS, HOW WOULD THE USSR
ESTIMATE ITS CAPABILITIES TO INVADE AND OCCUPY JAPAN?~~

~~What portions of Japan might the USSR estimate it could suc-
cessfully seize and hold? Hokkaido alone, Hokkaido plus northern
Honshu, all of Japan, etc?~~

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PART TWO: PROBABLE SOVIET INTENTIONS

VII VI. WHAT ARE SOVIET OBJECTIVES RE JAPAN?

Very briefly, how does Japan fit into over-all Soviet strategy ~~in the Far East?~~ How important is control or neutralization of Japan to the USSR?

VIII VII. TO WHAT EXTENT MIGHT THE USSR HOPE TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES BY MEANS SHORT OF EARLY INVASION?

Obviously the USSR seeks to pose a continuing threat to Japan. Could the USSR expect by threats, subversion, propaganda, etc. to: (1) achieve first a neutral and then a Soviet-dominated Japan; or (2) sufficiently soften Japan for attack subsequent to 1951? Might the USSR expect the US to eventually pull out of Japan, ~~leaving it more exposed to the USSR?~~

IX VIII. WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE -- PRO AND CON -- RE SOVIET INTENTIONS TO INVADE JAPAN IN 1951?

To what extent do Soviet Far Eastern preparations appear defensive rather than offensive and vice versa? To what extent do these preparations appear geared to a 1951 invasion, as opposed to later?

X IX. WHAT IS THE PROBABLE SOVIET ESTIMATE OF THE US AND WESTERN REACTION TO SOVIET INVASION OF JAPAN?

- A. Would the USSR estimate that it could invade Japan without gravely risking a global war? Would it estimate that hostilities could be confined to the Far East?

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- B. Even if willing to accept the risk of war with the US, would the USSR estimate that it could split the US from its Allies? However, in the Soviet view might not such a development, if the USSR did not attack Western Europe, actually be unfavorable to the USSR?
- C. Would the USSR estimate that the US would make an all-out effort to hold Japan, including deployment of large naval and ground forces, and strategic air attacks, including atomic bombing, ~~at least on Soviet Siberia?~~
- D. What would be the Soviet estimate of the political and psychological advantages and disadvantages of an invasion in 1951?

~~XI~~
X. IF THE USSR ESTIMATED THAT IT COULD NOT SEIZE ALL OF JAPAN, BUT ONLY THE NORTHERN PORTION, HOW WOULD THIS AFFECT SOVIET INTENTIONS?

~~XII~~
XI. WHAT NEW DEVELOPMENTS MIGHT SERIOUSLY AFFECT SOVIET INTENTIONS?

- A. Would the USSR probably invade Japan in event of general war beginning elsewhere in 1951?
- B. What would be the effect of accelerated Japanese rearmament on Soviet intentions?

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- C. What would be the effect on Soviet intentions of a US ~~disaster in Korea~~ defeat in and evacuation of Korea?
- D. What would be the effect on Soviet intentions of a US victory in and occupation of Korea?
- E. How would Soviet intentions be affected by a de facto or negotiated restoration of the status quo in Korea?

XVII XII. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of (1) the probable Soviet estimate of their own capabilities; (2) the probable Soviet estimate of the situation resulting from an attack on Japan; and (3) over-all Soviet intentions globally as well as in the Far East, what is the likelihood of a Soviet invasion of Japan in 1951?